FORTUNES TAKEN FROM PINE TREES

Money Made in the Working of Turpentine Orchards.

VALUE OF THESE NAVAL SUPPLIES

It Is Hard Work, Though, and the Returns Are Not Always Fabulous. Where Our Resin, Pitch and Turpentine Come From.

One of the principal industries at many southern ports is the shipping of "naval stores," that is, resin, rosin, spirits of turpentine, common pitch, brewer's pitch, tar and oil of tar. These Southern products are valued at $10,000,000 a year. Resin, or crude turpentine, is the material obtained by tapping or bleeding the trees. Spirits of turpentine is the liquid obtained by distilling the crude resin. Rosin, or colophony, is the residue after the distillation of resin. Common pitch is the residue from the dry distillation of rosin. Brewers' pitch, which is used for coating the interior of beer kegs and barrels, is obtained by stopping the distillation of resin before all the oil has been distilled. Tar is produced by distilling the wood itself, and oil of tar is obtained by distilling the tar. Each of these articles is separated, commercially into several different grades, and every grade has its own name.

The Sun's Georgia correspondent thus describes the "turpentine orchards" of that section: A pedestrian might start from Brunswick on the Atlantic coast, and without going much out of his way walk westward to the Mississippi river without once leaving the shade of the pine forest, except in crossing the innumerable rivers. The forest is about 100 miles wide, beginning on the North Carolina coast and swarving westward along the gulf, till it reaches Louisiana. Some of the workmen who help produce the naval stores live as much in the shade as the forest-dwelling tribes in Africa, and do not emerge from the pine shadows ten times in as many years.

Of this tremendous extent of forest, 2,250,000 acres are constantly kept at work producing naval stores, and 800,000 acres of new or virgin trees are tapped annually to keep up the supply, for trees can be worked profitably for four years only, and then must either have a long rest or be cut into lumber. It looks as if this industry ought to give constant independent work to every unemployed man in the south, as if a man need only buy a few acres of pine land at $2 to $3 an acre, or better yet, rent a tract for the purpose of "turpentining" it, as it is called, and be sure of making a good living for the next four years by tapping the trees all on his own account; in other words, to be as independent as the small farmer who raises his own crops. This was so once, but it is not the case now. Capital has been as busy with turpentining as it has been with the other industries, and it is practically impossible for a small owner to get even the price of his labor by turpentining his own little tract. The big producers set the pace, and there is no longer any chance for small operators.

THE TURPENTINER.

The turpentiner is as well known an institution in the pine belt as is the commission merchant in fruit and vegetable sections. He is in a sense a commission merchant, but besides that he is a manufacturer. Generally he does not own an acre of land, but he must have a capital of not less than $5,000 to begin a profitable business, and he knows that in the four years of his operations with a plant he must spend $20,000. Not only must he know all about producing and manufacturing naval stores, but he must have a good idea of the country. In the whole pine belt there are about forty of these large operators at work, and they produce the greater part of the naval stores of the world.

The turpentiner with his capital ready must first select his location with as much care as a farmer selects his land. He requires a solid tract of about 4,000 acres of forest that has not been tapped, and on this space there must be not fewer than 100,000 well-grown pine trees. To find such a tract, and to be able to rent it, is not always easy; but this is only a beginning. The tract must be near enough to a railroad or to a navigable stream to give him good shipping facilities, and there must be an unfailing supply of water for operating the still. Such tracts are found generally far away from civilization, and usually they are in the hands of several owners and each owner of course must be negotiated with. Some owners of pine land object to having their trees turpentined, believing that it injures the lumber. There is no haggling about the price, for the price for turpentining is as well understood as the market price for resin. The subsections into which a big turpentine orchard is divided are called crops, and an orchard must contain not fewer than twenty crops to be profitable. A crop is a sufficient number of trees to give 10,000 boxes; and as from two to four boxes are cut in large trees, about 4,500 or 5,000 trees are necessary to comprise a crop, which should cover about 200 acres. As the trees will yield profitably for four years, and no longer, the renting of turpentine land is always for periods of four years; and the standard price is $50 for each crop of 10,000 boxes for the four years. This gives the lessee the privilege of tapping the trees, cutting away underbrush, and operating his works on the premises, but nothing more. He must not cut down or otherwise destroy trees; and it is to his own interest to protect the forest against fire. At this rate he pays 12½ cents a year an acre for land that is worth about $2 an acre in the market, and he asserts that when he leaves it the trees are as valuable as they were before. The general opinion is that turpentining injures the trees and lessens the value of the lumber; but there are two sides to that.

DOWN TO BUSINESS.

With his 4,000-acre turpentine orchard secured, averaging about twenty-five good well-grown trees to the acre, the turpentiner next selects the spot for his works. If he can have his own way about it he puts them close to both rail and water. Where the railroad crosses a small stream is just the spot. He need not bother about a station, for the railroad company will gladly enough build a little siding to to his still, knowing that a great many thousand barrels of freight will be shipped within the next four years. Only rough sheds are necessary and these quickly go up, and then along comes the still. The copper still generally used has a capacity of about 800 gallons, or enough to carry a charge of twenty to twenty-five barrels of crude turpentine. The 4,000 acres of good trees furnish just enough resin to charge such a still twice in twenty-four hours during the working season. And when the still is erected tenderfoot passengers in the cars generally think that they have discovered a moonshiner's lair, for the outside of the stills are very much the same.

The labor question is the least of the turpentiner's troubles; indeed, it is hardly a question at all. The first steps are hardly taken toward establishing a plant before men begin to appear as if they dropped from the trees. No matter how isolated the site, there are negro cabins on or near the tract, and their occupants want work. Then the turpentiner has a following of his own, men who have worked for him in other orchards and they stick to the "boss." Wherever he goes, they are ready to put up their cabins and remain in the same employ, sure of work in that spot for the next four years. The colored man as a rule prefers turpentining to plantation work. On the plantation his "keep" is part of his pay, and he handles only about $10 a month. But in the backwoods all his provisions must be bought, as far as the employer is concerned, so there is no inducement to board him, and he receives from $1 to $1.25 a day, and supplies his own provisions. It amounts to about the same thing in the end, but the man has the felicity of spending $30 a month instead of $10. His cabin is soon built in the new orchard, generally close by a clear spot where he can make a little garden. With the vegetables that he can raise, the fish his wife and children can catch, and the game and birds his gun can bring down, the cost of living is reduced to a trifling expenditure for corn meal and bacon, coffee and sugar.

The workingman is as familiar as his chief with the peculiarities of the long-leafed pine. It has a number of distinctive features, and he knows them all. No man of science can tell him much about the three sections that compose the trunk of the tree—the bark, the sapwood, and the heart. He knows that it is the sapwood which supplies the flow of resin, and that the bark and the heart are as useless to him, as if they were not present, the sapwood being the comparatively soft folds lying between the bark and the heart. In a big tree the heart may be a foot thick, and it is full of resin, but the resin will not flow. It is this heart which supplies what in the north is called fat pine, and here in the south is called lightwood. Cut down the tree, and in a few years the bark and the sapwood decay and disappear, but the heart remains, almost as hard and as indestructible as iron. The planter hunts out these hearts for fence posts, because they are so full of resin that they will stand in the ground for a generation without injury. The tar maker must have them, too; but the heart is worthless to the turpentiner.

IMPORTANCE OF THE WEATHER.

The weather is of as much importance to a turpentiner as it is to a farmer. Give him steady, long-continued heat, or a series of cold rains, and he is sure of a poor crop. A cold spring is equally bad for him. But work in a new orchard begins before spring opens; the boxing may be done any time through the winter, to be ready when the sap begins to flow. The boxes are not ordinary boxes, but triangular holes cut in the trees. Two hundred thousand of these boxes must be cut in the orchard, at an expense of about $2,500. No trees of less than twelve inches diameter ought to be boxed, but trees of not more than eight inches are often made to do duty. The lower part of the box is cut about twelve inches above the ground, and the hole is made seven inches deep, slanting from the outside to the interior at an angle of 35 degrees. This makes a pyramid shaped cut into the tree, and forms a cup that will hold about three pints. While the boxers are at work, other men, or sometimes women or boys, are raking around the trees, removing all the pine needles and chips for a space of three or four feet, and burning the stuff in little heaps. This is done so that in case of fire in the woods the flames will not reach the box; and for the same reason as much as the underbrush as possible is cleared away and burned.

With the earlier days of spring the sap begins to flow, and then the turpentine orchard becomes a busy place. The boxes are all ready, but without further treatment no appreciable quantity of sap would flow into them. To start the flow of sap and guide it into the right channels, the men go to work with their odd-looking tools and chip or hack the trees immediately above the boxes, cutting away the bark at the proper points and making incisions into the wood in the shape of a broad letter V, ten or a dozen of them, one above another, each of the points bearing downward so as to form so many shallow gutters to conduct the sap into the box. This chipping is repeated every week from March till October or November. The soft resin which accumulates in the boxes is dipped out about seven times in the first season and poured into barrels to be taken to the still. Each crop of 10,000 trees should yield about forty barrels of dip or soft turpentine at each dipping, or 280 barrels in the first season, giving a total of 5,600 barrels for the whole orchard in the first year. The flow becomes greatest in the hottest months, July and August, and decreases as the weather grows cooler. As soon as the exudation is arrested and the crude resin begins to harden, it is scraped from the chip and the boxes with a long-handled scraper. This material is called scrape, or hard turpentine, and it contains only half as much volatile oil as the dip. The scrape amounts to about seventy barrels to the crop the first year and increases to 120 barrels in the second year. In the whole four years the entire orchard of twenty crops should yield about 120,000 gallons of spirits of turpentine, the average from each tree for four years being about a gallon and a half of spirits and thirty pounds of high-grade resin.

DISTILLATION.

The distillation is a matter that requires great care and experience to prevent loss in spirits of turpentine, to obtain the largest quantities of rosin of the higher grades, and to guard against overheating. After heating the still somewhat beyond the melting point of crude turpentine, a small stream of tepid water from the top of the condensing tub is conducted into the still and allowed to run until the end of the process; and it is by a peculiar noise made by the boiling contents of the still that the distiller knows when to stop—a sign that would have no meaning to a beginner. After all the spirit has been evaporated, the fire is put out and the residuum is drawn off by a tap in the bottom of the still. This molten rosin is first run through a wire cloth, and then through cotton cloth into a large trough; then it is ladled into barrels.

There is not much danger that turpentine will be overdone, for the profits are not large enough to attract any except men who have been brought up in the business and know no other. The best that can be said of the profits is that they are reasonably sure, for they are ridiculously small. The $5,000 capital required is for the still and other works, barrels, advance on labor and rent, houses, sheds, tools, wagons, and mules. The cost of four years' operating a single crop, or one-twentieth of the whole orchards, is estimated at $2,368.50, of which $125 is for chopping 10,000 boxes, $15 for inspecting and tallying the same, $12 for covering the boxes, $40 for raking around the trees, $555 for chipping the boxes, $333 for dipping the resin and scraping stands, $333 for hauling the dippings and scrapings, $222 for distilling at 20 cents a barrel, $395 for 122 spirit barrels at $2.80, $238.50 for making and filling 795 resin barrels at 30 cents, $80 for superintendence of the crop, and $50 for rent. This gives the following total expense for operating an orchard of twenty crops for four years:

Labor, rent and materials	$46,170
Interest on capital invested ($5,000)	1,200
Depreciation of plant, 10 per cent. a year for four years	2,000
Taxes and incidentals	630
Total expenses	$50,000

The 120,000 gallons of spirits of turpentine produced in the four years, together with 12,000 barrels of rosin, should bring in the market about $60,000 at average prices. It may be a little less, according to the supply and demand. But without such a great rise in prices, the turpentiner, with his $5,000 capital, his own labor for four years, and his risk from fire and otherwise, makes $10,000 in the four years, or $2,500 a year.

Delicate Taste.

Mr. Binks—What's that you are putting up on the top shelf?

Mrs. Binks—That's Fido's candy. He can't eat this cheap kind we get for the children.—Chicago Record.

CLAIMS THE EARTH IS NOW WABBLING

Our Planet Bacoming Erratic and Uncertain, It Is Said.

IT IS BEGINNING TO LOSE ITS SPEED

Doleful Prospect for the Human Race A Million Years Hence Is Outlined by a Washington Astronomer. Facts Upon Which He Bases His Conclusions.

Washington Letter, Pittsburg Dispatch.

Is this spinning-top called earth slackening its speed, and showing signs of "running down," by clearly evident wabbling? is a question that is now being investigated at the Naval observatory. Every clear night in some one of the big and little buildings which give the heights beyond Rock creek the appearance of a Moorish city, Professor George A. Hill, of the observatory force, is literally immersed to his neck in a desperate endeavor to find out why the earth does not turn evenly and steadily on its axis as any well regulated planet should. This and other absorbing investigations have been progressing for a considerable period at this most interesting of all the national properties, but they have been barely mentioned in the public prints, probably for the reason that they are supposed to deal with abstruse scientific problems, but more probably for the reason that no public report has yet been made of the work in hand.

But the fact that the earth is discovered to be wabbling to such an extent that degrees of latitude are not stationary but constantly changing brings at least this feature of investigation close to the most stupid mind, and makes it interestingly if not alarmingly "popular." There is no necessity for present alarm.

NO DANGER AT PRESENT.

Even if the tremendous speed with which the earth revolves upon its axis, more than a thousand miles an hour, is slacking, it will be some thousands or hundreds of thousands of years before any appreciable difference in the length of the day and night is noticeable, and the present generation need not fear, therefore, that the sphere will in their day cease its revolutions and swing around in the orbit with probably the same side always towards the sun.

What the reason is for this erratic performance Prof. Hill does not pretend to explain. He will only say that the source is believed to be intrinsic, and not due to perturbations caused by planetary or solar influence. It is his duty to observe the perturbances from day to day and report their character at the proper time.

For many years errors of computation of latitude have been observable, but it was not until 1889 that Prof. Rustuen, of Berlin, discovered that there was a constant and in some sense periodic change from established lines of latitude. Dr. Chandler, of Boston, declared the cause to be the irregular motion of the earth on its axis. The German Astronomical society took up the matter, and careful observation showed this to be the fact. The work of investigation was at once parcelled out among observatories in various parts of the world, the Washington institution being assigned a portion.

CURIOUS RESULTS OBTAINED.

The results have been curious in the extreme. It has been incontrovertibly established that the poles of the earth, instead of pointing always towards the same spot, in space, do not, in fact, ever do so, but are constantly wabbling exactly like the stem of a top which has so far lost the force with which it was started as to show signs of weakening and stopping.

Imagine the North Pole to be a real projection into space (as some people possibly believe) in the form of a gigantic lead pencil. Imagine, also, a vast sheet of paper spread stationary in space where the point of the pencil can touch and mark upon the paper as the earth revolves. Instead of the point spinning around and simply making a dot like a mighty period mark, it will begin to trace all sorts of eccentric curves, extending a distance of thirty-one feet on each side in every direction from what may be called the normal pose or beginning.

This wabbling, therefore, constanly makes a change of latitudinal lines ranging from an almost inappreciable divergence up to an extreme of about 62 feet.

It is pretty clearly established that there is a periodicity of these perturbations, but just what are its time and phenomena is not yet known, as the work of observation has been so brief. Prof. Hill is led to believe that during a period of fourteen months the pole increases its vagaries to a maximum and returns gradually to the minimum.

ANSWER IN THE STARS.

It must seem marvellous that an astronomer, by observing the apparent movement of a star billions of miles distant, can detect this small but highly important perturbation of the earth, but that is the method by which conclusions are reached. The aviations of the star (any star may be selected for the work) in crossing and recrossing a given celestial line, tells the whole story. The necessary computations are intricate and exhaustive, but the wonderful instruments now in use very much simplify the work.

It is probable that within a few months the reports made to the German Astronomical society by the various observers will enable that body to give to the world one of the most curious disclosures that ever emanated from the field of scientific research in regard to terrestial phenomena, and possibly some conclusion may be reached touching the cause of the wabbling of the poles. There will be no theorizing, however. The real scientist never theorizes in a scientific report, yet he must theorize and speculate in private or his road to truth and fact would be much longer and more monotonous than it is.

One theory is that the earth is losing the force with which it was started upon its revolutions, but this is met by the fact that since the first computations of the time of the diurnal revolution there has been no modification of the day's measure.

EARTH'S WEIGHT SHIFTING.

Another theory is that there is an unusual distribution of weight, and this seems to be the more plausible. But if the weight were stationary a new axis would be formed and the wabble would disappear. The wabble being periodic, the weight must be shifting, but also shifting periodically and constantly, and it may be due to the tides and to some law influencing them which is yet unknown. It is possible the constant change of latitude occasioned by this wabbling may lead to a gradual change of zones and seasons on the globe. Whatever the phenomena may mean the report of the German Astronomical society, based upon the aggregation of reports, of which that of Professor Hill will be an important part, will be awaited with great interest.

Another absorbing work in progress at the Naval Observatory is a collaboration with other observatories in cataloguing all of the stars from the first to the ninth magnitude inclusive, in the northern celestial hemisphere and for 23 degrees south of the celestial equator, which is as far south as the most southerly observatories at Washington and Algiers can reach. This work at Washington is in charge of Professor H. N. Skinner, who has made upwards of 20,000 observations, and catalogued about 9,000 stars in a belt which includes all stars between 14 and 16 degrees south.

CATALOGUING THE STARS.

The first star catalogue worthy of the name was constructed by Prof. Argelander, of the observatory at Bonn, in Germany, who began his work in 1859. Schonfeld took up the work when Argelander died, and the result is a catalogue in four large volumes of about 400,000 stars, in the same field in which astronomers of sixteen observatories are now laboring with the advantage of instruments that are vastly superior to those psed by the pioneers. The field of Professor Skinner's labors may be popularly indicated by stating that it includes four degrees in width of the belt in which Sirius, the most brilliant of the so-called fixed stars, is situated.

The exact cataloguing of these stars will enable astronomers to describe for each other the position of comets with greater exactness than heretofore. It has already resulted in the discovery of many variable stars not known as such to Argelader or Schonfeld. Professor Skinner is the lucky discoverer of no less than four of great interest in the field allotted to him. This vast work may also lead to discoveries of incalculable importance in regard to the course our own solar system is pursuing through the eternal depths of space, whether it is a system, as is supposed by some, revolving in harmony with other greater or lesser systems around a vaster center than the center of any single one of such systems; in short, the disclosure of the universal scheme to a vastly greater extent than can now be conceived in a scientific sense.

TRAVELING THROUGH SPACE.

It is now an accepted theory among astronomers that the system of which our little globe is a part is traveling with inconceivable velocity somewhere through space, but astronomical science is yet too young for even a guess as to the direction. It must require hundreds or thousands or tens of thousands of years for even this swift motion to change our relative position in regard to the nearest of the fixed stars to an extent sufficient upon which to base a tenable theory. That there has been such a change since astronomy became one of the sciences is well established. Moreover, many of the fixed stars, so-called, are known to have a motion of their own, and the discovery and record of this motion, which is called the "proper motion," in distinction from the apparent motion due to the swinging of the earth in its orbit, is an important feature of present and future work in connection with the cataloguing of these stars, and giving them a local habitation and a name by which the least departure from their "fixed" position may be known at once.

Still another task of collaboration is under the direction of Prof. Eastman, which is a re-observation and cataloguing of several hundred of the more important stars for purposes similar to those which led to the cataloguing of all stars of the ninth magnitude or brighter.

THE MAGNETIC NEEDLE.

Another work possibly more utilitarian in its character than those described is in progress in a mysterious cavern in the hillside near the main building of the observatory. This is called the magnetic establishment, and it is devoted to observations of the strange, and to a great extent, inexplicable antics of the magnetic needle. In a vault beneath a little structure composed entirely of wood, are the magnetographs. Every precaution has been taken in the construction of the vault to insure isolation of the magnets from disturbing local influences, even to the exclusion of all direct communication with the outside air. A continuous temperature of about 70 degrees is maintained by ingenious automatic machinery for increasing or decreasing the heat. The only diverting force in the vicinity is an electric railroad a fourth of a mile distant, and numerous tests have discovered the exact influence of the current, which is considered in the observations and deductions. In this mystic vault is seen the most remarkable evidences of those magnetic disturbances which travel with the speed of thought, not only from one part of the earth and its gaseous envelope to another, but also from sun to earth, from planet to planet, and probably (who knows?) from suns and systems which hold intimate magnetic communication with each other throughout the universe.

THRESHOLD OF KNOWLEDGE.

These studies are yet in their youngest infancy, and improved instruments, magnets, lenses, photography and mathematical machinery may, at no distant day, reveal wonders in the scheme of world creation, growth, decay and death, of which the most vivid imagination of a Poe or a Flammarion could not have the faintest conception.

It is not generally known even to Washingtonians that there are nights set apart for visitors at the observatory when any of the public who wish to probe the mysteries of the celestial universe which the naked eye cannot see may look through the magnificent 12-inch equatorial. Jupiter, with his remarkable belts and five satellites (the little fifth one recently discovered only one hundred miles in diameter, and having its orbit a bare 100,000 miles from the huge bulk of the planet, has not been seen from the Naval Observatory), has just passed from view on his way to become morning star. But Saturn is a wonderful and awful spectacle, with its vast rings and many brilliant satellites. But if the planets are not numerously on exhibition at this time the visitors yet do not lack entertainment. Prof. Bouger, who presides usually at these dark seances, turns the huge tube upon the star cluster in the constellation of Hercules, the most brilliant of those astounding aggregations of suns which are supposed to belong to one system, and which are either invisible or appear merely as a faint nebulous spot to the naked eye; or he will direct it to some of the wonderful colored stars; or to the beautiful quadruple star, Epsilon Lyrae, or to the Ring Nebulae, near Alpha Lyrae, which may appear almost exactly like our own milky way to dwellers upon some planet situated within its magic circle.

These are illustrations of the wondrous spectacles that may be seen through the 12-inch equatorial. The great 26-inch equatorial is not available for visitors, as its every moment must be utilized for scientific purposes every evening favorable for observation. Thus it will be seen that the great National observatory, with its vast machinery for celestial observation, its testing of binoculars, shronometers and compasses, its production of naval almanacs, is not wholly devoted to work that may be called merely for utilitarian and nautical purposes, but that its large crops of able scientists are also engaged in labors which are the main purposes of the great observatories of the world, and which have for their purpose the discovery of the most mysterious problems of the form and phenomena of the universe.

She'll Giggle Constantly.

"I'm so worried about my daughter," said the woman in the new fur cloak. "She goes about so solemn, so depressed. I'd give the world, doctor, to see her smile again."

"That's easy enough," answerd the doctor, briskly; "get her into a church choir."—New York Recorder.

Not Altogether Bad.

The Chicago—And do you find the water so very bad?

The Elsewhere—Oh, no. With salad dressing it is not at all bad.—Detroit Tribune.

Thrs. Correct.

She writes herself down henceforth Mrs.
But there's more in her life still than krs.,
And nobody ought
To go away with the thought
That she knows even yet just what blrs.
—Detroit Tribune.

CONVENTIONAL CIVILITY.

We Are Gradually Losing Our Politeness, It Seems.

From the Post-Express.

A New York paper which is not noted for over delicacy of feeling has been arguing, with no little awekening of general interest, that the conventional politeness of correspondence is not worth while. Apparently without many scruples itself, it yet sneers at the public for the "falsehood and flummery" of its use of "Dear Sir," and "Yours truly," and it asks why "Esq.," or "Mr." or "Mrs." or "Miss" should be written on a fully addressed envelope, since the postoffice officials do not care a rap whether "Jane" be married or single, and will take it for granted that "Thomas" is Mister. It even has calculated that the American public wastes 8,333 years every year in this meaningless courtesy, and the value of this time it estimates at fully ten millions of dollars, which to a practical people is surely disgraceful.

What other reform can be more important than this? If it be true that such merely conventional civility is foolish, or worse, let us consistently have done with it all. Away with the cheery, but quite unconsidered, "Good morning;" and silence the cordial, "How do you do" that rarely waits for the answer. Banish the gentle raising of the hat; the needless nod and smile; the kind word that comes more from the head than heart; the wave of the hand and the cry of "Farewell." Let us meet and pass as locomotives, that are only on business bent. Let brevity and directness mark our speech and selfishness our every action, and think of the years and years that will be "saved!"

CARRIED FURTHER.

Nor here alone can we stop. Society's closer and more elaborate relations will be quite idle courtesies; at dinner it will be every one for himself and may the hindmost lose his dessert; and there will be no formal calls, no "pleasant time" fibs to well meaning hosts and hostesses, no need of acknowledging invitations, no maintenance of reticence, nor regard for the preservation of dignity, no curbing of anger, nor hampering of individuality. Let us, in short, if the World's view is correct, be savages once again without the barbarian's reverence, let us be implicitly true, no matter how the truth burns or hurts; and perhaps in the centuries that we "save" by the abolition of conventional courtesy, there will be time to do all we accomplish now through the kindly help of others, to bear more burdens all alone, to get over disappointments, and slights, and unkind deeds and words, and wipe the tears that at first would flow while we still were sensitive to the world's true opinion. What is the use, indeed, of all of life's amenities; why should men laugh, or birds sing, or flowers bloom, or women comfort with smile of love if there be no gain to them? Why are the fields so lovely, and why the lavish radiance of the autumn woods, and were it not better if the sun slumped into the ocean without touching with glory the sky and wave? Why is not life all cold and hard and hurried? Shall we not do what we can to make it so, by omitting conventional courtesies!

HAVE GONE TOO FAR.

The fact is, we have pared down unnecessary politeness a good deal of late. It will not stand much more. In Paris and Germany now men raise their hats to one another, but we have not the time for that; in France, at least, every funeral procession stops traffic and is greeted by reverently lifted hats and is do not trouble ourselves; in the old days our fathers signed themselves in their letters, "Believe, Sir, Your Very Affectionate and Humble Servant to Command," and lads addressed their fathers as "Respected Sir." The one has been shortened to "Yours truly," or "Yours;" and the other to "Dear Father," and "Dear Pop." Shall eight thousand years be saved by shortening them any more? We are reminded of the sneering comment of a Westerner when told Caesar's famous apaphthegm, "Veni, Vidi, Vici." "It is too verbose," said he. "Casear could not have seen without coming, nor well hve conquered without seeing, so one word would have been sufficient for the despatch."

We shall be willing to save our share of 8,000 years by shaving off the little conventional civility which remains to the beginning and end of our letters, when it is shown what good use has been made of the time gained when bicycles were shortened to "bikes" and gentlemen to "gents." For, whatever they do with it, that time costs its savers dearly.

IN HONOR OF VASCO DA GAMA.

Preparation in Portugal to Commemorate His Voyage to India.

From the Sun.

Portugal is making preparations for the celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of the sailing of the Portuguese navigator, Vasco da Gama, on his voyage around the Cape of Good Hope to India. He was born in the town of Sines, in Portugal, in 1450, and died on Christmas Day, 1524. On July 8, 1497, Da Gama set sail for India, and in May following, having passed the Cape of Good Hope, he landed at Calicut. Prior to that time, European commerce with the east had been through the Mediterranean only, and the opening of the water route sailed by Da Gama resulted in a complete reconstruction of the lines of European and Asiastic commerce. There is to be in celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of the sailing of Da Gama an exhibition at Lisbon illustrating the contributions of Portugal to the art of navigation, and setting forth her trophies of discovery, which are almost as glorious as those of Spain, and in that period eclipse those of any other maritime power.

Portugal is a small country, with a land area one-third less than that of the state of New York, and with a population half a million less than that of the state of Pennsylvania, but it has turned out in its time some celebrated navigators, Cabral and Da Souza among them. It is a somewhat peculiar circumstance in the history of ocean navigation, which the Portuguese celebration of the voyage of Da Gama recalls, that the chief navigators of Europe have usually been natives of minor kingdoms and without the advantages which would naturally accrue to a representative of one of the larger governments. Christopher Columbus, as every school boy knows, was a native of Genoa at times when the Italian peninsula was sub-divided among numerous petty governments. John Cabot was a Venetian who sailed in the service of England as Columbus had sailed in the service of Spain. Amerigo Vespucci was a Florentine who sailed originally in the service of Spain, and afterward transferred himself to the Portuguese service, and then went back to the Spanish service for a second time.

Vitus Behring, after whom Behring Straits were called, was a Dane by birth who served under the naval flag of Russia. Magellan, after whom Magellan Straits were named, was a native of Alemtejo, in Portugal, and was the first to complete the circumnavigation of the globe, in 1522. Verazzani was a Florentine, whose voyages of discovery were undertaken under the protection of the flag of France. Hendrick Hudson was an Englishman, and it seems surprising to many persons in this day familiar with the preeminence of England as a maritime nation that he should have been in the service of the Government of Holland when he discovered Manhattan Island.

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